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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council

Letter dated 24 March 2009 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to attach hereto the aide-memoire on the voluntary pledges and commitments of the Russian Federation in the context of elections to the United Nations Human Rights Council (see annex). I request that this aide-memoire be issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 104 (c).

(*Signed*) Vitaly **Churkin**

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Annex to the letter dated 24 March 2009 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Candidacy of the Russian Federation for re-election to the United Nations Human Rights Council for 2009-2012

The Russian Federation has been a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council from the time of its establishment in 2006. Its first term of membership expires in June 2009, and pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251, the Russian Federation has decided to put forward its candidacy for re-election to the Council for the period 2009-2012 under the quota for the Group of Eastern European States.

The Russian Federation is firmly attached to such fundamental values as freedom, justice, life, well-being and human dignity, family traditions, political diversity, integrity of the court system, responsibility of leadership, social guarantees and the eradication of poverty and corruption, as well as to its international obligations in the field of human rights. We continue to pursue a policy of the further strengthening of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Our efforts at the domestic level are aimed in particular at the following:

(a) Ensuring broad participation of citizens, political parties and other social institutions in the shaping of State policy, including decision-making;

(b) Creating a qualitatively new legal system and promoting integrity of the court system in order to eradicate corruption and ensure the rule of law;

(c) Further expanding economic and entrepreneurial freedom;

(d) Giving effect to the social guarantees embodied in the Constitution;

(e) Supporting the national traditions and cultures of the peoples of Russia as a principal factor in harmony within society, unity of the nation and the stable development of the country.

At the international level, we see our tasks as the following:

(a) To achieve respect for human rights and freedoms throughout the world through constructive international dialogue on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the utilization of other possibilities, including at the regional level, in the human rights field, and also of rejection of double standards and respect for the national and historical characteristics of each State in the process of democratic transformations without the imposition on anyone of borrowed value systems;

(b) Promotion of the strengthening of international legality, which is based on compliance by States with their national constitutions and their obligations under international treaties;

(c) Firm opposition to the phenomena of neo-fascism, any forms of racial discrimination, aggressive nationalism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, and to

attempts to rewrite history and use it for purposes of inciting confrontation and revanchism in world politics, or to subject to revision the results of the Second World War;

(d) To develop, inter alia by utilizing the resources, potential and initiatives of civil society institutions in the sphere of public diplomacy, international cultural and humanitarian cooperation as a means of instituting a dialogue between civilizations, achieving harmony and ensuring mutual understanding among peoples while paying special attention to interreligious dialogue;

(e) To develop cooperation with international and non-governmental human rights organizations for purposes of strengthening universal norms of human rights protection free of double standards, and coupling them with the responsibility of individuals for their actions, above all in terms of preventing offence to the feelings of believers and inculcating tolerance and strengthening moral principles in the human rights dialogue;

(f) To expand participation in international human rights treaties and bring the legislation of the Russian Federation into line with them.

The Russian Federation is convinced that the standards and principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights must be consistently implemented throughout the world. In order to attain this objective, there is a need to focus the efforts of all parties to international agreements on strengthening dialogue and cooperation and involving those concerned in a collective process of developing and adopting decisions. The principal motive force of this process must be the United Nations, and in particular the Human Rights Council.

The Russian Federation is convinced that the Council's activity must promote the development of constructive inter-State cooperation, the protection of human rights, and the strengthening of the international regime of respect for human rights on the basis of justice and equality of rights in accordance with the purposes and principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations. The Russian Federation is sure that human rights are called upon to become a factor in facilitating rapprochement among various States and groups of States, and also in strengthening the climate of confidence and mutual respect in international relations.

If elected to the Council, the Russian Federation will work actively to make it an effective and efficacious instrument for encouraging and protecting human rights throughout the world, and to incorporate in its work the fundamental principles of universality, non-selectivity, objectivity, equal treatment of all categories of human rights and respect for the diversity of cultures and civilizations.

The Russian Federation provides every possible support for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and for the High Commissioner, making an annual contribution of $2 million to the Office's budget. A framework agreement like which nothing else so far exists has been concluded between Russia and the Office. This agreement incorporates an understanding for the development on a long-term basis of cooperation between the Russian Federation and OHCHR in such areas as ensuring the rule of law, promoting equality and tolerance, and developing a system of education in the human rights field. The Russian Federation is consistently implementing this agreement in practice.

An important component of the Russian Federation's policy is active cooperation with the special procedures system of the Human Rights Council. In recent years our country has been visited by a number of mandate holders under that system, most recently by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, and the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers. Further visits are also planned. In addition, the Russian Federation is cooperating actively with regional institutions and mechanisms in the human rights field, inter alia within the framework of the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Baltic Sea States.

Russia is a party to six core international human rights treaties: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racism, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Our country submits to the relevant human rights treaty bodies in a timely manner periodic reports on the implementation of the provisions of the above instruments.

In 2008, the Russian Federation signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. It is our firm intention to broaden the range of our relevant obligations.

As part of its obligations as a member of the Human Rights Council, in February 2008 the Russian Federation successfully participated in the Universal Periodic Review provided for in General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006.

In view of the foregoing, we believe that our partners in the General Assembly will support the candidacy of the Russian Federation for re-election to the United Nations Human Rights Council for the period 2009-2012.